

Men Who Could Speak

Another of Simmons' tools was his de facto speaker's bureau. Popular orators such as Charles B. Aycock, Robert Glenn, and Henry G. Connor traveled the state at Simmons' behest to boost the white supremacy platform. Simmons planned for most of the speechmaking to take place in the fall, aiming for early speeches to "keep up a running fire, and not enough to tire the people" in August and September even as the print campaign was already moving to educate readers as to the campaign's main tenets. During the last weeks of the campaign, Simmons had speakers whose rhetoric was peppered with local tales of the evils of Fusion rule and "negro domination" in every available town hall and commons. Particularly adept with rhetoric was Wilmington native Alfred Moore Waddell, who spoke to rallies late in the campaign and pointed out numerous instances of the injustices heaped upon Wilmington as a result of Fusion rule.²⁶

Charles Aycock, a veteran speaker from earlier campaigns, traveled the state on behalf of the Democratic Party as its "voice." In May 1898, just before the Democratic State Convention convened, he "sounded the keynote of the 'white supremacy' campaign" in Laurinburg.²⁷ Because of his dedication to the Democratic Party, combined with his proven record of approval by the state's voters, Aycock was rewarded in 1900 with the governor's office.²⁸ Another well known speaker, one

who possessed restraint regarding racist strains of the 1898 campaign, was Henry G. Connor. Connor's correspondence and speeches repeatedly indicated that he was "willing to go a very long way to remove the negro from the politics of the state" as he was "managing a campaign of which I shall never be ashamed." Although definitely on the side of white supremacy, Connor reflected the concerns of conservative Democrats when he hoped "that the present conditions may pass away without violence or bloodshed and that our whole people may be wiser and understand each other better." He fully felt that once the Democrats regained power over the state, they should earnestly seek to improve the lives and education of blacks.²⁹

Men Who Could Ride

The newspapers and the speaker's circuit facilitated Simmons' goal to reach all types of people in the state. Illiterate or working-class people without subscriptions to papers responded well to speechmaking. Businessmen, clerks, and others with access to newspapers were given ample opportunity to read about the campaign's promises, Republican corruption, and their moral duty to vote for the Democratic ticket. The last component of the three-part campaign

suffrage and educational reform. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v. "Charles Brantley Aycock."

²⁹ Connor wished "to speak to the negroes and let them understand how I feel towards them but, just now I would not be understood." In the 1898 campaign, Connor was elected to the state House of Representatives from Wilson County. Because of his work in the 1898 campaign, Connor was rewarded the post of Speaker of the House in 1899. Henry Connor to George Howard, November 11, 1898 and Henry Connor to George Howard, October 20, 1898, Henry G. Connor Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; Josephus Daniels, "Henry Groves Connor," 1929, 7-9. Poland, *Glorious Revolution*, 34.

²⁶ Poland, *Glorious Victory*, 4.

²⁷ Connor, *The Life and Speeches of Charles Brantley Aycock* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1912), xii.

²⁸ Connor, *Life and Speeches of Charles Brantley Aycock*, 61-72. Although he had been a candidate for governor and other political office in previous elections, Aycock was not a candidate for office in the 1898 campaign. He was elected governor by a large majority in 1900 on a platform of white